Nova Scotia

Government Business Plan

For the fiscal year

2005 2006

105-06171/

Nova Scotia Government Business Plan

NOVA SCOTIA

For the fiscal year

2005
2006

NOVA SCOTIA

Message from Premier John Hamm

On behalf of the Government of Nova Scotia, I am pleased to present our Business Plan for the 2005–2006 fiscal year.

Since coming to office, our government has placed a high premium on the values of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to Nova Scotians' needs, while at the same time implementing an active government agenda that keeps the commitments we have made to Nova Scotians.

To that end, our annual government business plan serves as a detailed account of our government's current position. It outlines the policy directions we will be taking in the coming year, as well the state of each of our major initiatives. When read in combination with the 2005–2006 provincial budget, it provides the clearest possible picture of what our government is doing and what our coming priorities will be.

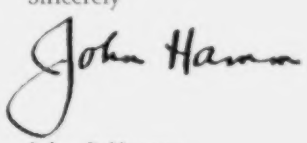
The days of difficult decisions are far from over. The challenge is to make sure that our decisions this coming year are the right ones. So that we can guarantee tomorrow will be better than today.

This plan will hopefully answer some of your questions about how we will face these decisions. I hope it will give you a clear idea, not only of what our government intends to do, but why.

This is a document designed to provide answers. To that end, we have revamped the Business Plan to make it easier to read and easier to understand, concentrating on activities that will affect Nova Scotians during the reporting period. You will also find an overview of consultations and other initiatives for the coming year. Detailed, program-specific information is available in the departmental and agency business plans, which can be found on the government's website (www.gov.ns.ca).

We invite you to examine our 2005–2006 Government Business Plan and invite you to let us know about any questions, suggestions, or concerns you may have.

Sincerely



John F. Hamm

Nova Scotia

Government Business Plan

NOVA SCOTIA

For the fiscal year

2005 2006

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Vision

A healthy, prosperous, and self-sufficient Nova Scotia.

Introduction

Themes

In the coming year, the Government of Nova Scotia will be focusing on four key priorities:

- Education
- The Health System
- Building Greater Prosperity
- Protecting What Nova Scotians Value

In each case our ultimate intentions are the same: to h healthier and more prosp and to guarantee a brigh ufficient future for our chil ildren.

It is t that starts with educa rince will invest over $70 milli this year in the education system. As Nova Scotia becomes more deeply integrated into the knowledge-based economy, it is more important than ever that we have the skills and education needed to compete and succeed. From reforms of our public school curriculum, to our investment in the Nova Scotia Community College, to skills development and adult learning initiatives, we are committed to the principle of lifelong learning, so that any Nova Scotian who wants a better life for their family can build that future here at home.

In the coming months the province will introduce a new education strategy that will build on the successes of the one just concluded. It will be a strategy aimed at improving the educational experience for our youth so they can meet their full potential right here in Nova Scotia.

Health will also continue to be a major priority for government, and the health system will benefit by more than $220 million in additional funding this year. Nova Scotians will see new hospitals, renovations and expansions of existing hospitals, more health providers and new health programming.

We will continue to expand on the directions outlined in our health strategy, *Your Health Matters*. Of equal importance, we will also increase our efforts to promote and encourage healthy lifestyles, particularly among our youth. Today, there is an increased awareness of the dangers of unhealthy diets and inactive lifestyles, just as there is a recognition that too many of our province's children remain at risk. The 2005–2006 year will see increased resources and increased attention given to the challenge of children's health and, in particular, to ensuring that in every part of Nova Scotia children have the opportunity to live active, healthy lives.

Other key health promotion initiatives include measures to prevent and address problem gambling, drinking and youth smoking.

When it comes to creating prosperity, we already have a tremendous foundation on which to build. Nova Scotians have created close to 40,000 new jobs over the past six years. The energy, work ethic, and enthusiasm are already in place. Our goal is not only to build on the approaches that have already worked, but to identify new areas of untapped potential, such as by recruiting skilled immigrants. We will also aggressively promote our province's brand abroad so that more visitors, workers, students, and investors understand the possibilities that exist in Nova Scotia.

This year, the province will enhance its stature of being a competitive business environment: the Business Occupancy Assessment Tax will be eliminated, and other business-friendly tax measures will be introduced. As well, we will continue our program of regulatory reform, maintaining public safety while simplifying compliance and enforcement regulations.

Lastly, we are recommitting ourselves to protecting those things that Nova Scotians value. As Nova Scotia continues to grow and change, we find ourselves all the more appreciative of our province's unique heritage. Throughout Nova Scotia, our communities have environmental, cultural, and historical legacies of which we can all be proud. Protecting these legacies for future generations is more important than ever.

Where We Stand

Our commitment to Nova Scotians begins with fiscal responsibility. This spring, the province will introduce its fourth consecutive balanced budget. This commitment to responsibility is a major part of our competitive advantage; and our businesses and families, new and old, agree.

The past year has seen resolution of several issues that will help us meet our obligations. Nova Scotia successfully negotiated agreements with the Government of Canada that will see more federal dollars remaining in our province.

For the first time, Nova Scotians will be guaranteed to be the primary beneficiaries of their own offshore. On February 14, 2005, the province signed an agreement that will give Nova Scotia 100 per cent of its offshore revenues without threat of a federal clawback.

Upon final approval of this measure by the Parliament of Canada, the province will immediately take every dollar we receive in proceeds from the offshore agreement—more than $830 million—and use them to pay down the province's debt. In doing so, we will reduce our interest costs by roughly $40–50 million a year. That means the province will have up to $50 million more

to improve education, health care, and social programs—money that used to go to its lenders as interest payments. This new revenue will not allow the province to meet every priority, but it will provide room to make sound investments in Nova Scotia's future.

The province also reached a new health agreement with the federal government that will help it meet the mounting demands on its health-care system. The agreement is not a permanent fix for the health system; however, it will provide additional security and help to meet the priorities of doctors, nurses, and patients alike.

Nova Scotia is also co-operating with both federal and municipal governments to ensure that federal fuel taxes are reinvested in stronger municipal infrastructure.

Key Initiatives

The coming year will see some new initiatives coming to life in our province, notably Brand Nova Scotia, immigration, and French language services.

In March 2005, Nova Scotia launched its new provincial brand, *Come to Life*. More than a logo or slogan, this brand will present to the world some of our province's most unique advantages: innovation, variety, and quality of life.

The brand is the result of extensive consultation with business and community leaders, as well as from the input from visitors, investors, and immigrants. During our research into the provincial brand, we found a recurring theme—that many of the province's most powerful advantages are intangibles, that, for many, Nova Scotia is set apart by a quality of life that allows people to easily balance the responsibilities of work and home.

As a result of the new provincial brand, Nova Scotia will be able to present a more accurate, more positive, and most importantly, more unified message to the wider world. The natural splendour and rich cultural tapestry that are traditionally associated with Nova Scotia will continue to play a large role in our public identity. Now, however, the province can supplement these qualities with a new story and a new confidence that tells each potential investor, worker, visitor, or student, that Nova Scotia has the right fit for them.

As part of the provincial brand, the province will also be rededicating itself to attracting new immigrants to Nova Scotia. Immigrants have proven to be a strong contributor to innovation and economic growth where they settle. As Nova Scotia's birthrate slows and our population ages, attracting skilled immigrants will become more important than ever, if it is to build on its current economic growth. The Province

is working with immigrant communities in Nova Scotia, as well as with the federal government, to let potential immigrants know they are welcome here, to establish their families here and build better opportunities here.

At the same time as we attract new communities to Nova Scotia, the province will continue to work with some of its oldest communities, who have contributed so much to the provincial heritage.

One example will be the Acadians, who rightly have tremendous pride in their rich heritage. In 2005–2006 the government will do its part to ensure that they can also look forward to a bright future.

The province's commitment will begin with language services. In 2005–2006, the Office of Acadian Affairs will consult with departments and agencies across government to develop a multi-year French service strategy that is prudent, cost-effective, and sensible. The province will set clear priorities for French language services and target resources to where they can best meet our Acadian community's needs.

There will also be expanding support for the African Nova Scotian community. In 2004 the creation of the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs was formalized by the Legislature. In 2005–2006, the office will have its own operating budget, will hire staff, and will begin to develop programming that addresses the needs identified through its in-depth dialogue with the community last year.

Conclusion

Nova Scotians have accomplished much in the past year. There is plenty to be proud of. However, the challenges facing the province are far from over.

Nova Scotia's future is not without challenges, many of which are outside its hands. Even with the increased revenues for the health system or from our offshore, demands continue to greatly outstrip supply.

The province's health system, education, and debt-servicing costs account for more than three-quarters of its annual budget. The remainder, 23 per cent, must cover all other programs and services that government provides. Every other priority of our government—roads, social programs, the environment, strengthening our justice system, building on its economic growth—must come from this 23 per cent.

The province will remain diligent in its budgetary process, in order to keep Nova Scotia on a secure financial footing, so it can meet the demands of the future, while providing the quality of life that all Nova Scotians expect.

Education: Learning Is Succeeding

Education is an investment in the future: by the province for greater prosperity, by individuals for a better life.

In 2005–2006, the province will allocate more than $70 million to ensure that Nova Scotians get the support they need to grow up healthy and smart. Later in this business plan, you will see how the government is taking steps to see that there are opportunities for our graduates here at home.

The educational segment of the province's business plan continues to build on the firm foundations established through our first Learning for Life plan. It can be summarized as follows:

- Grades primary–12, Learning for Life II, Brighter Futures Together:
  - More than $4 million will "raise the bar," setting and achieving higher learning standards.
  - Students at risk will benefit from a $6-million investment that will improve learning options and make more technology available.
  - The province will support healthy and active learning opportunities through a multi-million-dollar funding allocation.
  - Several million dollars have been allocated to expand the cap on class sizes and to pilot a unique preschool program.
  - Over $1 million will be used to purchase more books and more learning resources.
- Post-secondary education will also benefit:
  - The Nova Scotia Community College will see a multi-million-dollar investment to address operational and growth needs.
  - The province will allocate more than $2 million to make it easier for more students and families to access student aid and to reduce student debt load.

A new funding formula is being sought for school boards that is fair, transparent, and equitable. While the province is reviewing funding options, school boards will receive at least the same funding as in 2004–2005. In recognition that change is needed, the Cape Breton-Victoria, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, Halifax, South Shore, and Tri-County school boards will share roughly $2 million in new funding this year.

P–12 Funding

At the Education Partners' Forum held in February 2005, the province presented a range of new ideas centred around six themes: setting higher standards for learning; ensuring success for all students—those who are struggling as well as those who excel; developing active and healthy learners; providing adequate time for teaching and learning; measuring and reporting on student performance; and strengthening partnerships for student success

Partners' Forum participants included educators, school board members, students, representatives from school advisory councils, the Nova Scotia School Boards Association, the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, government departments, and many others.

A wealth of information was shared at the Partners' Forum, and it is being used as the province considers education policy and programming.

The province's education investments will become apparent in new schools, expansions and additions to existing schools, new teachers, new programs, new learning resources, and increased information being shared among educators, students, and their families.

Amherst Elementary School, Cumberland Elementary School, Hammonds Plains South, and Barrington Municipal High School will be ready for students during this school year. Construction will begin soon on the Truro West Elementary School, the combined St. Patrick's/Queen Elizabeth High School in Halifax, and Harbourside/Robert Jamieson on the Eastern Shore. In addition, 20 schools across the province will be improved or expanded during 2005–2006. For example, earlier this year, the province announced a $3.6-million, three-year expansion to Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School.

For the first time, the province will pilot a preschool program, mainly in communities that have limited access to day-care facilities, either for profit or not for profit. The full-day program will be activity based rather than instructional, helping the students to prepare for a successful experience when they enter grade primary. Up to 20 sites will be established, with start-up dates to be determined by the individual school boards. Discussions are now under way to determine their location.

For the third year in a row, the province organized early-hiring job fairs at four universities that train teachers, to enable Nova Scotia's school boards to better address their teacher hiring needs. Representatives from school boards across the province travelled to Université Sainte-Anne, St. Francis Xavier University, Acadia University, and Mount Saint Vincent University to interview students in the final

year of an education program. The boards will evaluate and hire candidates later in the year.

In keeping with its commitments under the Learning for Life initiative, the province will expand its cap of 25 students per class to grade 2 classes in September 2005. In addition, combined grade primary/1 classes will have a maximum of 20 students or an additional non-teaching adult in the classroom. Grade primary and grade 1 classes that have students with special needs who have an individual learning plan, designed to help them succeed at school, will also have a maximum of 20 students or an additional non-teaching adult in the classroom.

A standard curriculum for language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science in grade primary, jointly developed by the four Atlantic provinces, will come into play across Nova Scotia in 2005–2006.

Efforts to help students who are struggling in school will continue throughout the year. In 2005–2006, Reading Recovery, an early intervention program that helps students overcome reading difficulties, will be expanded and made accessible for more grade 1 students. The province is also working on adapting the program for French immersion students.

Students in grades 4 to 10 who have English or French reading and/or writing challenges will benefit from better assessment tools and support programs designed to help them become better learners. The province will provide professional development to more than 100 teachers to support implementation of Active Readers/Lecteurs actifs 7–9 and help students acquire these critical learning skills. Additional funds have been set aside to help students in grades 7 and 8 whose difficulties with reading and writing were identified through the 2003 and 2004 Literacy Assessments.

The province will also focus on improving numeracy skills across Nova Scotia. Funding will be earmarked to provide mathematics teachers and mentors with additional training, new math textbooks for students in grades 4 and 9, and new Mathematics Essentials classes at the senior high school level.

A number of learning programs will be available in 2005–2006 that will prepare students for the working world. Components include Community Learning Partnerships, Integrated Career Education and Planning, Skills for the Workplace, Flexible Design and Delivery, Instructional Teaming, Expanded Course Options, Head Start in the Trades, and Connecting with Families. As well, under the Options and Opportunities umbrella, a Student Life/Work Portfolio will be launched for grade 7 students.

School boards will receive financial resources they need to expand course

options for grade 11 and 12 students; more schools will offer International Baccalaureate programs; and there will be more opportunities for students to take advanced-placement examinations. New science and arts programs will be introduced at the senior high level in schools across the province.

Gifted students will be the focus of a teaching resource entitled Challenge for Excellence, which will provide educators with better tools and techniques to stimulate advanced learners and to keep them motivated.

Following successful pilots of the School Improvement Planning/Accreditation program at 16 schools over the past two years, the province will extend the program to 50 schools this year. Within five years, all schools should be in the program. Under the program, schools conduct an internal review, identify areas where they have opportunities for improvement, and then develop strategies to make those improvements happen. The province supports the schools in the program throughout the year, through professional development sessions and other resources.

Safe, Healthy, Equipped Learning Environments

Steps are being taken to ensure that our schools are safe, healthy learning environments. Over the next three years, all schools will adopt a code of conduct using guidelines developed by the province. This year, 100 schools will complete professional development for programming documents and guidelines that support implementation of the code of conduct.

Information technology is a fundamental element of today's learning environment. In 2005–2006, the province will modernize its technology inventory by putting 1,500 new computers, software, and accessories into classrooms. Technology recycling, a program that places refurbished computers into classrooms, will continue. This program has the added benefit of providing valuable experience for recent technology program graduates. Funding will also be available to provide teachers with technology-related support and training.

MEASURE:
Students with access to computers at school

	2004 actual	2005–2006 target
Pentium II, 266 mHz or better	5.4 students per computer	5 students per computer, grades 7–9

Funding for an additional 50 online education seats in small high schools will be introduced, and three new courses will be developed. An online course is taught by a teacher who posts course notes and assignments and interacts with students through a course website. In some cases, there can be live instruction through an online video feed.

Through a leadership role in the Council of Ministers of Education's Canada Copyright Consortium, the province will encourage the federal government to ensure that amendments to copyright legislation address the needs of students and teachers to access publicly available digital material on the Internet for classroom use.

Celebrating Our Diversity

In 2005–2006, the province will offer a range of classes that celebrate Nova Scotia's diverse cultures and heritage.

Two schools in Cape Breton, one in the Tri-County board, and one in Halifax currently offer grade 6 intensive core French programming; and the province wants to expand the program in 2005–2006. Other alternative training methods for core French which are being examined include increased use of French during part of the school year and delivery of high school core French courses through distance education.

A curriculum guide and learning resources for the grade 12 African Heritage Literature course will be distributed, and support will continue for the grade 11 African Canadian Studies programming launched in 2002.

To further support adoption of the Black Learners Advisory Committee's (BLAC) *Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners*, the Student Support Worker program will be fully implemented. Schools will gain the recommended student support workers and be ready to meet provincial guidelines coming in 2006–2007. Funding to the Africentric Learning Institute will increase this year, and it will begin to deliver community programming and educational research. As well, Community College Awards will rise 50 per cent, to $1,800.

MEASURE:
Implementation of BLAC Report recommendations

Year	Implemented Recommendations
2001	13 of 30
2004–2005	22 of 30
2007–2008 (target)	30 of 30

The province will improve its Mi'kmaw culture program by developing new resources for Mi'kmaw Language 7 and developing a draft curriculum guide for Mi'kmaw Language 9. Currently, Mi'kmaw courses are offered in seven schools. In addition, the province will identify demonstration sites to examine and participate in best practices regarding First Nation learners. To increase support for Mi'kmaw learners, the Department of Education will develop the terms of reference for the Home-School Liaison Program and identify three pilot sites, with the intent that they be staffed with a Home-School Liaison Worker.

The grade 11 Gaelic Studies course will continue, and a teachers' workshop will improve educators' awareness of this culture.

How Do We Rate?

Educators, parents, students, and the community will learn more about the effectiveness of Nova Scotia's education system in this and coming years.

Teachers of grade primary to grade 3 will have new assessment tools this year to help them identify their students' strengths and to address students' difficulties in learning mathematics.

Grade 6 students' literacy skills will be tested, and results will be shared with parents. The progress of students who are having difficulties will be monitored.

At the senior high school level, provincial examinations will be administered in language, science, and mathematics. Assessments of French language training—both as a first and as a second language—will increase.

This year the province will continue to emphasize personal health and growth and encourage our students to make healthy life choices. There will be a continued emphasis on reducing smoking and on promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles.

The percentage of students in grades 7, 9, 10, and 12 who smoke dropped from 36.1 per cent in 1998 to 23.2 per cent in 2002, and that trend is expected to continue. A new health education curriculum will be introduced for grade 7, and a variety of anti-smoking resources will be used to reduce smoking among youths.

In 2005–2006, the province will survey students in grades 3, 7, and 11 to gauge their physical activity levels and compare them to a similar survey carried out in 2002. Additional support will be provided to implement physical education programs in grades primary to 9 and to develop new programs for grades 10–12. Students will be encouraged to be active in their home and leisure time as well. Support to boards and other clients will be increased through the services of a provincial school health coordinator and a provincial active healthy living consultant.

Not all learning takes place in a classroom. Three new correspondence courses at the high-school level—in biology, chemistry, and history—will be released, and five others will be piloted, while development gets under way on six more future courses. The province introduced six new courses in 2004.

Throughout the year, there will be an improved information flow between the Government of Nova Scotia, school boards, and the community. Planning for implementation of a single, province-wide student information system will continue. This system will allow teachers and administrators to better plan, operate, and report on the public school system efficiently and effectively. As well, the province will share school improvement planning details with parents, including information submitted by each school board.

To help school boards operate more efficiently and report more consistently, a project to implement standardized SAP Human Resources and Payroll modules will be undertaken.

A province-wide student records policy will be introduced in 2005–2006 to set a standard for student record management and to ensure efficient student record transfers within the Nova Scotia public school system and outside of the province.

Learning, beyond the Classroom

Learning does not end on graduation day. In today's environment of constant and frequent change, there is a need for lifelong learning.

Through the Skills Nova Scotia Framework, the province will continue to encourage adults who did not complete their schooling during their youth to improve their skills through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning. Strategies to fulfil the province's commitment to developing a skilled and adaptable workforce include identifying skill sets needed by industry and business in the future; engaging more employers in apprenticeship training and industry mentoring and coaching programs; researching employer incentives to provide workplace learning; developing a framework for prior learning assessment and recognition; and continuing efforts to encourage more youths to explore careers in skilled trades. As well, the province wants more Nova Scotians to access career development programs, services, and resources.

Post-Secondary Learning

At the post-secondary level, additional funds will be invested to support increased enrolment at the Nova Scotia Community College. The province will also work with the college to establish protocols around changes to existing programs and proposals for new programs and will negotiate a long-term operational funding arrangement through a memorandum of understanding.

The province recognizes that students are concerned about the affordability of education, and this topic is being addressed on two fronts.

Under a memorandum of understanding signed in December 2004, universities will receive stable, predictable funding, while tuition fee increases are limited to no more than 3.9 per cent, for most programs, for the next three years. Tuition fees have increased by about 7 per cent in each of the past three years. The agreement also limits increases to other fees such as those for labs and residences.

In 1997–1998, university funding was reduced to a low of $175 million. When the current memorandum of understanding expires in 2007–2008, the province will have increased university investments by approximately $43 million.

Secondly, improvements to the Student Assistance program will see increased loan limits, debt management measures, targeted grants to students in under-represented groups, and changes to parental contribution requirements.

MEASURE:
Nova Scotia Student Assistance

	2003–2004	by 2006–2007
Average Nova Scotia student loan amount	$4,130	$4,455 (8 per cent increase)
Student loans approved	10,966	11,840 (8 per cent increase)

To bolster Nova Scotia's strengths in agriculture, the province will provide a broad range of post-secondary educational programs, training, and research through the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC). The Bachelor of Science in Agriculture degree program will be revised, and the province will examine proposals for a variety of other relevant degrees. Faculty will become more involved in agricultural research and post-graduate training. The NSAC will also see the start of construction on a new poultry research facility.

MEASURE:
Nova Scotia Agricultural College performance

	2004–2005 current	2005–2006 projected	2006–2007 projected	2007–2008 projected
Enrolment	753	770	790	820
International students	27	38	50	57
Graduates employed in their field within a year of graduation	90 per cent	94 per cent	95 per cent	95 per cent
Value of research and infrastructure grants	$6.0 million	$5.0 million	$6.0 million	$6.5 million

Better, Faster Health Care; Healthier Nova Scotians

In 2005–2006, the health system will continue to improve, making better and faster health care available to Nova Scotians, provided by increasing numbers of health professionals. At the same time, Nova Scotians will learn to make healthier lifestyle choices that will, in the long term, reduce demand on the health system.

The province will increase health-sector funding by more than $220 million in the coming fiscal year.

In 2005–2006, the province will honour its multi-year funding commitment for hospitals and other services provided by the district health authorities (DHAs). Multi-year funding was established in 2002 to give the DHAs stable, predictable financing so they could better manage their annual budgets. This is in addition to extra funding already provided for salaries and wage settlements in the health system.

Among the increases in the 2005–2006 fiscal year are more than $65 million for increased salaries for health professionals, more than $49 million for long-term care, more than $25 million in multi-year funding, more than $17 million to reduce wait times, almost $17 million more for Pharmacare, more than $2 million for support staff for new information technology initiatives, and almost $3 million for a new performance-based contract with Medavie Blue Cross (formerly Atlantic Blue Cross Care), the first new contract with the organization in 30 years, which should streamline the health billing and information processing system.

Health System Challenges

There are many challenges facing our health system. The population is aging. By 2016, almost one in five Nova Scotians will be 65 years of age or more. We have the third-lowest life expectancy in the country, some of the highest cancer-related death rates across Canada, and high incidence of diabetes and depression. This, coupled with an aging health-care infrastructure and the emergence of new and improving health-care standards, will place additional financial pressure on our system.

As well, the health sector is labour-intensive, accounting for the equivalent of more than 30,000 full-time jobs in Nova Scotia. During the coming year, the province will continue to train, recruit, and retain more doctors, nurses, and other health providers, both to meet demand in under-served areas and to offset retirements.

For its part, Ottawa will share more health money with the provinces and territories. In 2003, the Government of Canada increased

health-sector payments to Nova Scotia by $653 million over four years. In 2004, an additional $1.2 billion increase over 10 years was established.

Recruiting Health Providers

Demand for health-sector staff continues to grow across the country, and the province is taking steps to attract qualified people. In 2003–2004, and in each succeeding year, the province has funded eight new seats in Dalhousie University's undergraduate medical program, a 10 per cent increase. Starting in 2006–2007, the province will fully fund the salaries for nine residency positions in anticipation of the graduating doctors.

Under the Nursing Strategy, the province plans to hire roughly 80 per cent of Nova Scotia's approximately 200 nursing school graduates. In addition, an estimated 50 trained and experienced nurses will return to the profession, and another 75 nurses will be recruited from outside the province

Over the past two years, the province has funded 50 seats in a medical laboratory technologist program and provided eligible students with a bursary on the condition that they will work in Nova Scotia for at least two years after graduation.

A community-based collaborative team approach is key to renewal of primary health care in Nova Scotia. The province is investing $650,000 to support the formation of new teams, including nurse practitioners, who are key members of the team approach. This year, funding will be provided to the district health authorities and the Tui'kin initiative in Cape Breton to hire four new nurse practitioners, allowing a more creative approach to meeting the health needs of people in unique areas of the province. The Tui'kin initiative brings together the five Cape Breton First Nations bands with provincial, federal, and university partners to build capacity and shape the future for local health-service planning and delivery. In addition, there will be some funding to introduce other health providers to a limited number of primary health-care settings.

The demand for chronic care assistants to assist in meeting the health-care needs of Nova Scotians has increased significantly in recent years. The province, in collaboration with its partners, is planning a concentrated and coordinated approach to chronic care assistant recruitment in 2005–2006.

An Ounce of Prevention ...

As in so many endeavours, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." That is especially true in health care, and steps are being taken to reduce the incidence of injury and disease. One of the timeliest measures is the number of people receiving flu shots.

MEASURE:
Increasing number of seniors who report having a flu shot

Base Year: 2001–2002	Target: 2005–2006
62 per cent	80 per cent

MEASURE:
Decreasing number of seniors hospitalized for pneumonia and flu

Base Year:	Target: 2005–2006
1,312 per 100,000 population	less than 1,273 per 100,000 population (Canadian average in 1998–99)

Health facilities will see improvements in 2005–2006. Using special funding made available for diagnostic equipment under the recent First Ministers' Health Accords, the province will add new magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) units in Antigonish, Kentville, New Glasgow, and Yarmouth; and they will begin operation in 2006–2007. The province will also fund 21 new medical and surgical in-patient beds in Kentville, and 50 more restorative care beds will be added across the province. The Cobequid Community Health Centre is also nearing completion. New additions and renovations to existing facilities will follow across the province, after discussions with the district health authorities.

Children, in particular, will benefit from a number of health initiatives. Universal hearing screening will be available for newborns, starting in 2005–2006, through provincial funding of the Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Centres. As well, a $4-million early intensive behaviour intervention program will help more than 300 families whose children are diagnosed as autistic. This fiscal year, an expanded program at the IWK Health Centre will provide more physical rehabilitation services to children with disabilities.

At school, students will benefit from a multi-million-dollar investment in healthy eating initiatives. The province is increasing its funding for breakfast programs in schools, and the Healthy Foods in Schools program will see more healthy snacks and meals available and

less "junk" food. Funding grants to school boards and district health authorities will help to promote healthy eating and physical activity for young Nova Scotians.

With help from the province, each district health authority will have an additional public health nutritionist, who will help to implement the Healthy Eating Nova Scotia Strategy in schools. The DHAs will receive additional money to further promote healthy eating to Nova Scotians at the local level.

The Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program and the district health authorities will collaborate this year on lowering wait times for both screening and diagnostic testing, providing a more accurate picture of screening rates across the province.

New Initiatives in Health Care

In 2004–2005, the province worked with health professionals and mental-health consumers to implement core service standards and introduce new standards for eating disorders, developmental disorders, and services for seniors. This year, we will continue our progress on these standards while reducing wait times, addressing staffing issues, and working closely with the primary care and home care systems.

A new Mental Health Act is before the Legislature; and following extensive consultations that will improve the proposed act, the province hopes to see the legislation become law in 2005–2006.

In Nova Scotia, almost 6 per cent of the population has diabetes, making Nova Scotia the province with the second-highest prevalence of diabetes in Canada. Left untreated, diabetes can lead to complications such as heart disease, kidney failure, blindness, and amputation.

Drugs and supplies needed to manage diabetes are covered for some Nova Scotians through the Seniors Pharmacare and Community Services Pharmacare programs. However, many other Nova Scotians with diabetes have no insurance coverage for the drugs and supplies needed to prevent or delay the onset of complications from their disease.

During 2005–2006, an income-based program will be designed for families with low incomes and no prescription drug coverage. With new provincial funding, the program will cover insulin, oral diabetic drugs, glucose test strips, syringes, needles, and lancets as listed on the Nova Scotia Formulary.

A self-care component will also be developed and offered to people accessing this program. This will promote linkages to existing services and resources, while helping people to better manage their own health. Self-management support is key to the success of this program.

With renal disease growing by 10 per cent annually across Canada, there is increasing pressure for more dialysis capacity. A provincial approach to the development and long-term management of dialysis is being developed. The Provincial Dialysis Group has identified four priorities: infrastructure, satellite dialysis programming, peritoneal dialysis, and risk modification. Each priority will be addressed with strategies to resolve the issues.

An increasing wait list for chronic pain management services has resulted in a funding allocation to Capital Health in 2005–2006 to operate expanded pain management services.

Stroke and heart disease are the leading causes of health and disability in Canada. In 2005–2006, the province will pilot a comprehensive program involving stroke prevention, emergency services, acute care, and rehabilitation. Partnering with the Heart and Stroke Foundation, health providers, researchers, and the district health authorities, the province will continue to plan approaches to stroke and heart disease prevention and outcomes improvement.

This fiscal year will be the first full year of operation for the $31-million cost of care initiative announced in the 2004–2005 provincial budget. Under this initiative, the province pays the full cost of health-care services for seniors residing in nursing homes.

Responding to a long-standing service gap in palliative care services in the Yarmouth area, the province will provide funding in 2005–2006 to add a coordinator and support the development of an interdisciplinary palliative care team. The approach will be consistent with the work of the Provincial Hospice Palliative Care Project and will serve people living with a life-threatening illness or grieving the loss of a loved one.

Beyond the Hospital

The province is also addressing drug, gambling, and other addictions. A new Prescription Monitoring Program will replace an old, inefficient manual tracking system with up-to-date technology and faster data collection. Nova Scotians should see this program implemented in 2005–2006.

Nova Scotia's first gaming strategy, announced in April 2005, is a comprehensive five-year plan that focuses on the treatment and prevention of problem gambling. Among other initiatives, the strategy will reduce the number of video lottery terminals in use and the hours when they can operate and will slow down the machines' speed of play.

The strategy was produced after extensive discussion, a comprehensive review, and evaluation of existing information on gambling. A number of provincial

departments and agencies participated in the development process, which included stakeholder meetings and public feedback, a review of relevant research and literature, an analysis of other jurisdictions' experiences and approaches, and expert review and analysis.

As these changes come into effect over the course of 2005–2006, the province's gaming revenues will be reduced, while treatment and prevention investments will increase.

Compared to their counterparts in other Canadian jurisdictions, Nova Scotians consume more alcohol than most. The province is developing a strategy to reduce the number of problem drinkers in Nova Scotia and will fund five program coordinators and resources at the district health authority level.

Over and above helping Nova Scotians address more commonplace health-care needs, the province is preparing for a major catastrophe, should one occur. For the second year running, the province has increased its emergency measures funding allocation. In 2005–2006, the increase will be 28 per cent, to ensure that Nova Scotia has the capacity to carry out its emergency preparedness and public safety protection measures. Our comprehensive "all-hazards" strategy would bring together all levels of the health sector to address infectious disease threats such as SARS, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (the human form of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE), West Nile virus, and influenza, as well as the threats of terrorism and other natural and unnatural disasters.

The province will also review its livestock health regulations to meet new food safety responsibilities, developed in consultation with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Data will be gathered this year that will enable the province to measure its success in making Nova Scotia's food-processing industry safer and healthier.

Investments will be made to establish more teen health centres across the province over the next five years. The province will also work with school boards to make school facilities such as gymnasiums available to the community for as many hours as possible.

Building Greater Prosperity

For several years, the province has worked hard to build greater prosperity in Nova Scotia. To do so, the province took measures to get its financial affairs in order and developed an economic growth strategy for the province: Opportunities for Prosperity. To a large extent, these efforts have been successful. After four successive balanced budgets and many other initiatives in place, the future is looking brighter. Now, five years into Opportunities for Prosperity, we will review our accomplishments and renew our approach to economic growth. With our renewed strategy, we will continue to chart the course to prosperity in Nova Scotia.

In 2005–2006, the province will invest approximately $5 million in the Nova Scotia Research and Innovation Trust. These funds will increase Nova Scotia's research and development capacity to stimulate innovation that will bring new products, new technologies, and new services to markets around the world. By tapping into federal grant programs and other project proponents, the province will leverage its investment more than 100 per cent. The chief beneficiaries of this program will be universities and colleges, researchers, and the industrial sector.

Brand Nova S

A key element in building gr[illegible] rosperity will be the province's Brand Nova Scotia initiative. Focusing on the key attributes of the province, the brand messages will establish a unique, consistent identity for many government programs and initiatives and private-sector services and products, which will quickly associate them with Nova Scotia. The Brand Nova Scotia initiative will develop communications programs, partnerships with the private sector, and policy support. The objective is to draw investment, tourism, and immigrants to the province by conveying a sense of variety, of innovation, of lifestyle. Starting in 2005–2006 and continuing in coming years, the province will participate in trade shows, direct marketing, advocacy advertising, special events, and business workshops to present the world with a fresh view of Nova Scotia.

Bringing international attention to Nova Scotia is also the focus of the province's immigration strategy. Early in 2005, a Minister of Immigration was appointed, and the Office of Immigration was established. Nova Scotia's demographic trends indicate that our population is aging, our birthrate is declining, and our youth are leaving the province to find work. Immigration will increase our population of entrepreneurs, wage earners, and

consumers, which, in turn, will create business and employment growth opportunities. In 2005–2006, the Office of Immigration will begin to inform Nova Scotians about the importance of immigration to our future prosperity, while attracting and retaining greater numbers of educated, skilled, and productive immigrants to Nova Scotia.

The tourism industry, with annual revenues around $1.3 billion, is an important element of the provincial economy. It includes 3,400 businesses and provides roughly 33,000 tourism-related jobs across Nova Scotia.

This year, the province is working to increase its tourism revenues by $50 million. Through Brand Nova Scotia and other initiatives, growth will come through product development, sales, and marketing that will see returns on investment at least equal to those of 2004–2005. Between 2002 and 2012, we will double tourism-related income in the province.

Attracting immigrants and promoting Nova Scotia are part of our approach to building prosperity. The other element is helping the economy to thrive here at home. This means encouraging entrepreneurs and businesses to innovate, to offer quality products and services, to export, to employ.

In 2005-2006, the province will issue 200 nominee certificates.

Bringing Nova Scotia to the World

While bringing more of the world to Nova Scotia is important, so is bringing more of Nova Scotia to the world. The province's Trade Strategy is designed to connect the province's small and medium-sized enterprises with buyers around the world. The Service Export Program, which was piloted in the fourth quarter of 2004–2005, was a big success. Thirty companies shared approximately $100,000 to help them improve their offerings. The province will more than double that investment in 2005–2006, benefiting more than 50 small manufacturers. Another element of the strategy, Trade Team Nova Scotia, will help small manufacturers and service providers to learn about and prepare for export markets

The province will offer multi-sectoral events that will help approximately 100 small firms to meet and interact with industry association representatives, suppliers and clients, and a variety of provincial government departments. Trade missions involving around 240 Nova Scotians, held at home or abroad, will help to cement trade deals for our business sector.

A competitive tax regime is essential if businesses are to grow and prosper. The province will review its taxation system and the overall level of tax burden, with a view to ensuring efficiency, promoting competitiveness, and responding to the

social needs of Nova Scotians within the fiscal resources available. Also in 2005–2006, the province will eliminate its Business Occupancy Assessment Tax. This follows several years of discussion with municipalities, business, and industry leaders to ensure that no one sector—especially small seasonal or tourism businesses—is adversely affected.

Maintaining Our Transportation Infrastructure

Maintaining Nova Scotia's roads infrastructure is a major component of our prosperity strategy, and in 2005–2006, the province will increase the resurfacing, restoration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction work on provincial highways. Last year there was a substantial increase in maintenance improvements and in the capital program. This year will see similar investments in maintenance improvements and approximately $30 million in capital funding. The province currently invests more money in building and maintaining highways than it collects in motive fuel taxes.

A multi-year plan to expand Nova Scotia's 100-series highway system will, in turn, improve public safety, expand capacity, and stimulate economic growth. The following projects will be under way in 2005–2006:

- Highway 101, twinning, St. Croix to Avonport
- Highway 101, elimination of at-grade intersections
- Highway 103, twinning, Otter Lake to Tantallon
- Highway 103, new alignment at Barrington
- Highway 104, twinning, New Glasgow to Pine Tree Road
- Highway 118, new interchange at Wright Avenue Extension
- Highway 125, twinning, Coxheath to Sydney River.

There is more in the works than just improvements to the 100-series highways. Rural highway maintenance work—including asphalt patching, ditching and gravelling, shoulder repairs, brush cutting, and guardrail installations—will be carried out. To make this happen, the Road Improvement Money (RIM) program will double by the end of 2007–2008. As well, the province will continue its five-year steel-truss bridge replacement program, undertaking more than $10-million-worth of projects in 2005–2006 alone.

The railway is an important element of transportation infrastructure in Cape Breton. This year, the province will invest more than $2 million to keep the Cape Breton rail line running. New regional opportunities are on the horizon, and this investment will ensure that businesses in the region can prosper from them when they arise.

Building Prosperous Communities

Across the province, a network of 14 regional development authorities (RDAs) is charged with attracting new businesses and investments to their communities, mainly in rural Nova Scotia. For the first time in five years, the province will increase RDA funding, and matching funds are expected from the Government of Canada and the municipal sector. The resulting business investment will lead to employment opportunities and stimulate rural economies.

On the energy front, the province will work with the industry to train workers and to attract business and investment to the offshore. Oil and gas–related research will also be supported, and the province will gain the maximum employment and business impact possible.

The signing of the Offshore Resource Revenue Agreement on February 14, 2005, made Nova Scotia the principal beneficiary of its offshore resource revenues, guaranteeing the province 100 per cent of provincial source petroleum revenues, including royalties. In order to capitalize on the revenue opportunities from Nova Scotia's offshore, there is a need to encourage offshore exploration. The province has therefore made it a priority to increase the investment attractiveness of Nova Scotia's offshore to petroleum exploration and development companies as well as the service and supply sector.

Government is much more than a promoter or investor in the business community—it is also a major customer. The Supplier Development Program's funding will grow this year to help small and medium-sized businesses to tap this lucrative government market, worth approximately $1 billion when all levels of government are considered. The program will educate business owners about government procurement policies, the tendering system, and related topics, helping them to be more successful in securing government contracts. It could also secure opportunities for Nova Scotian companies to compete for government business in other Canadian jurisdictions.

The agricultural and fisheries sectors are important to the provincial economy. In 2004, farming and food manufacturing contributed an estimated $695 million to the province's gross domestic product. In 2003, fish landings were valued at $801 million. In total, the food and agriculture sector was responsible for $1.4 billion in exports during 2003. Today, roughly 74,000 Nova Scotians work in agriculture, fishing, and food manufacturing, food distribution, and food service. The sector goes beyond traditional farming and fishing activities to include aquaculture, nutraceuticals (food supplements and additives such as omega-3), pharmaceuticals, and agri-tourism.

Putting Food on the Table, around the World

Nova Scotia's food sector will continue to grow by remaining competitive and profitable and by adding new markets for its products. The province helps the sector to prosper through a variety of financing, business development, marketing, and technological initiatives designed to encourage investment, product diversification, and sustainable growth. These include, but are not limited to, the activities of the province's Agriculture and Fisheries Investment Plan, the Farm and Timber Loan Board, the Fisheries and Aquaculture Loan Board, and the New Entrants to Agriculture program.

In aquaculture, the Government of Nova Scotia will implement a new growth strategy, the first since 1996. Currently, it can take someone interested in developing a new aquaculture site several years to meet federal environmental assessment requirements. The province is working with the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans to make the aquaculture site application process more effective and efficient, and we expect to make significant progress in 2005–2006.

MEASURE:
Market growth
(numbers are rounded)

	2004–2005 actual	2005–2006 target	2006–2007 target	2007–2008 target
Value of aquaculture industry	$42 million	$45 million	$50 million	$55 million
Value of sport fishing industry	82 million	$82 million	$83 million	$83 million
Fish product exports	$1 billion (2003)	$1 billion	$1 billion	$1 billion
Value of boat building, domestic	$54 million	$52 million	$55 million	$55 million
Value of boat building, export	$29 million	$28 million	$35 million	$35 million
Value of agriculture production	$404 million	$410 million	$410 million	$420 million
Value of agriculture and fisheries exports	$1 billion	$2 billion	$2 billion	$2 billion
Capital expenditures in agriculture and fisheries	$119 million	$120 million	$120 million	$120 million

Like any industry, the agriculture sector must take steps to mitigate risk. The province will continue to migrate farms from legacy safety net programs such as crop insurance to the new Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization program and the Production Insurance program. These initiatives are cost-shared with the Government of Canada.

MEASURE:
Farms protected by Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization (CAIS)

	2004–2005 actual	2005–2006 target	2006–2007 target	2007–2008 target
Percentage of production margin* protected by CAIS	78 per cent	80 per cent	82 per cent	86 per cent
Production Insurance Coverage	$54 million	$54 million	$84 million	$86 million

*Eligible income less eligible expenses

Protecting What Nova Scotians Value

There are a variety of elements that make up the fabric of Nova Scotia, and the government will take action to protect what Nova Scotians value. These include safe communities, the environment, the quality of life for seniors and the disabled, and an inclusive society that embraces diversity.

Preserving Family Life

The quality of family life is a key measure of the social wealth of Nova Scotia, and the province will take steps to improve the lot of families in 2005–2006.

In February 2005, the province increased its child-care subsidies following a child-care review that began in 2004 and is still in progress. The long-term goal is to provide a child-care subsidy to a greater number of eligible low-income families. During 2005–2006, the province will also examine the operational grants it provides to child-care centres.

Since the establishment of the Early Childhood Development Agreement in 2002, $54 million has been invested to enhance the range of programs and services available to Nova Scotians. In 2004–2005, investments were made to help full-day child-care facilities recruit and retain qualified staff; to develop innovative language, literacy, and cognitive development programs; to support non-profit community-based assistance for parents and child-care providers; and to promote greater volunteerism at family resource centres. In 2005–2006, the province will make quality family resource centre–based parent education programs more accessible, starting by developing an inventory of available programs and where they are offered.

New staff will be hired to reduce the backlog in the Maintenance Enforcement Program. As a result, more single parents will receive the financial support they need.

Housing is a basic need, fundamental to personal well-being and the base upon which to build healthy and sustainable communities. Under the first phase of the Affordable Housing Program, the province will add up to approximately 200 new rental units as well as repair and renovate up to 40 existing rental and up to 100 resident-owned homes to ensure that low and moderate income individuals and families have access to affordable housing for at least the next 10 years. In March 2005, the Government of Nova Scotia signed a multi-year agreement with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation that will see both parties contribute to an $18.9-million investment that will make about 300 additional low-income homes affordable across the province.

The province's Energy Efficient Housing Program will invest almost $1.2 million to help low-income home owners, including seniors and working families, as well as non-profit and community groups, to make home improvements that will provide them with long-term savings on their energy expenses.

Support will continue for the Community Supports for Adults renewal project, with the launching or expansion of three key programs: Direct Family Support, Alternate Family Support, and Supported Apartments. In early 2005, Direct Family Support will introduce financial assistance to families who care for a disabled family member at home, providing an alternative to placing the family member in an institution. Alternate Family Support is similar to foster care, providing financial assistance to caregivers who look after people with disabilities. Already available on a limited basis in Nova Scotia, the program will expand in the fall of 2005. People with disabilities who do not need much supervision or support can access the Supported Apartments program to remain as independent and self-reliant as possible. Under this option, care may range from a few hours a week to a few hours a day, depending on the individual's circumstances. The Supported Apartments program is already available in the province, on a limited basis; it will expand in early 2005.

In total, the province is increasing the Community Support for Adults funding by $1 million.

Later in 2005–2006, Income Assistance and Employment Support clients will benefit from more than $1 million in increased funding for personal allowances. As well, funding for the shelter rates program will increase significantly.

The province will also increase the funding it provides to the Community Transportation Assistance Program by $153,000. The program helps community groups in rural Nova Scotia who provide bus services for people with disabilities, seniors, and disadvantaged persons.

Seniors are an integral part of family and community. This year, the province will invest more than $200,000 to further the work of the Task Force on Aging and to coordinate government policies, programs, and services that affect seniors. These programs and initiatives include healthy, active lifestyles for seniors, an elder abuse prevention strategy, and the Nova Scotia Seniors Literacy Project. The Task Force on Aging will be a top priority for government, as will development of the Strategy for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia. It will guide government decision making and influence societal actions for the next decade and beyond.

As well, we will keep the lines of communication open, to keep seniors informed about programs and services available to them, to hear the needs of this diverse community, and to harness the skills and experience of senior volunteers.

Heritage and Culture

Heritage and culture are very important to Nova Scotians. In 2005–2006, the province will add Le Village historique acadien de la Nouvelle-Écosse in Pubnico to the Nova Scotia Museum system. Community and locally managed provincial museums will share funding to help them with increased operating expenses.

In addition to the Gaelic language classes mentioned earlier in this plan, the province will work to further sustain the Gaelic language and culture.

This year will mark a number of significant anniversaries across the province. These include the 400th anniversary of the Port Royal settlement, the 50th anniversary of the Angus L. MacDonald Bridge in Halifax, and the 50th anniversary of the Canso Causeway, once the deepest causeway in the world. The province will mark the Causeway's opening and the ensuing celebrations in the summer.

A Healthy, Clean Environment

A healthy and sustainable environment is as critical to the people of Nova Scotia as quality education, good health, and safe communities.

The Kyoto Protocol came into effect on February 16, 2005, and this has led to an increased urgency to implement climate change measures in Canada. The Government of Canada continues to increase its focus on energy efficiency, cleaner fuels, and renewable forms of energy such as wind, solar, and biomass. The province is actively participating in the national process as well as on provincial and territorial committees to ensure that Canada achieves real greenhouse gas reductions that are cost-effective and do not impose undue burden on Nova Scotia.

In 2005–2006, the province will continue to remediate the Sydney Tar Ponds. All work related to the first federal/provincial cost-sharing agreement will be completed, and work will begin on the next multi-year agreement. By the end of this fiscal year, an equitable federal/provincial funding agreement should be in place and preliminary engineering work under way. Also by this time, the Sysco site should be completely decommissioned.

Work will continue on a comprehensive salt-management plan to reduce the use of salt on our roads and to mitigate its environmental impact. So far, all activities

potentially resulting in the release of road salt into the environment, such as storage and handling and the application of salt on roads, have been reviewed and best-management practices have been developed. The next step is to monitor these practices and compare results against set targets.

The Government of Nova Scotia is mindful of the impact of environmental issues related to water, air and soil quality, and climate change on the province and of the province's impact on the environment.

We are negotiating with the Government of Canada for a new multi-million-dollar commitment by the province to fund a variety of "green" projects, primarily for sewers, water treatment, and solid-waste treatment.

The province will continue to engage farms in the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture's Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) initiative.

MEASURE:
Percentage of farms registered in the Environmental Farm Plan

2004–2005 actual	2005–2006 target	2006–2007 target	2007–2008 target
20 per cent	30 per cent	40 per cent	50 per cent

In addition, the province will enhance its aquaculture-monitoring program, under the Environmental Monitoring Program.

MEASURE:
Percentage of aquaculture sites monitored

2004–2005 actual	2005–2006 target	2006–2007 target	2007–2008 target
60 per cent	75 per cent	90 per cent	100 per cent

A new program will be launched in 2005–2006, funded through a $5 charge that was recently incorporated in fishing licences, to restore freshwater fish habitats. Community and recreational fishing groups will undertake freshwater fish habitat restoration projects using money from this fund.

MEASURE:
Fish habitat restoration projects completed

2004–2005 actual	2005–2006 target	2006–2007 target	2007–2008 target
New program, 2005–2006	15	20	25

Salmon has always been one of the most popular recreational fisheries, and the province is investing $500,000 this year to improve salmon habitat and hatcheries.

Safe Communities

Safe, healthy communities are taken for granted by most people. To maintain this sense of security, the province will invest more money in public safety.

Starting in 2005–2006, more than $6 million will be spent over four years to support safe communities by bringing municipal police forces into a national system of intelligence-based policing. The province will pay the salaries of new municipal police officers to replace more experienced officers who will be seconded to Criminal Intelligence Service Nova Scotia. Priorities will include marijuana grow operations, the sale of illegal drugs, illegal use of prescription drugs, smash-and-grab tobacco rings, electronic fraud, murders linked to bike gangs, and border security.

Later this year, the province will address the recommendations of the Task Force on Off-highway Vehicles. An interdepartmental committee will propose a schedule and planning approach that are needed for implementation.

The province will also step up its efforts to reduce impaired driving, including an expansion of roadside sobriety tests.

Additional funding for monitoring commercial trucking will translate into safer vehicles on the highway and reduced wear and tear on the roads from overweight vehicles. The funds will be used to hire additional compliance officers and to keep the scale houses open longer.

The province is allocating more money for Legal Aid services, to cover increased salary and operating costs for the program and to increase the amount of time a Legal Aid lawyer can invest in a case and be reimbursed by the province. The end result will be better representation of Legal Aid clients.

High-risk, high-needs young offenders will be in the spotlight in the coming year as the province examines ways to work collaboratively with other governments across the nation to address youth crime and the new Youth Criminal Justice Act. There is a continuing need for community-based programming and supervision of these youths, and the following activities are planned:

- seek changes to Canada's Youth Criminal Justice Act and the federal Criminal Code that would carry stricter sentences and categorize auto theft as the serious offence it is, especially when it leads to reckless disregard for the lives of others

- monitor implementation of a new Community Corrections service delivery model and the establishment of youth specialists
- implement an updated program strategy for the Nova Scotia Youth Facility, including adjusting programming to meet the changing needs of fewer but more challenging youth offenders
- complete the development of practice and curriculum standards for the Restorative Justice Program
- continue to pursue establishment of a province-wide Youth Court to ensure effective prosecution of young offenders.

A full, independent, and public inquiry into the release of a youth who was later charged and convicted in the death of Theresa McEvoy of Halifax is planned for the coming year. The inquiry chair will have full authority to hold hearings and compel testimony from witnesses. The final report, including findings and recommendations, will be made public.

The province will also focus on developing stronger relationships with the broader stakeholder community and across jurisdictions to address historic and emerging public safety issues. In 2005–2006, this will include the following:

- draft legislation to provide extra-jurisdictional authority for peace officers
- work with public safety partners to improve response to organized crime/terrorist threats and gang-related activity
- assess mechanisms to better use strategic input from stakeholders
- develop/enhance and introduce a new certification/decertification process and standards for Canadian Firearms Safety Course instructors
- develop a proposal regarding legislative reform of the private security industry.

Another priority area will be reducing family violence. In 2005–2006 the province will develop and implement new training, case coordination, and education initiatives, such as the following:

- examining approaches to expedite the processing of high-risk cases involving violence against a spouse or other intimate partner
- expanding Nova Scotia's Family Law Centres
- making the Respectful Relationships Program more accessible
- enhancing the delivery of men's treatment programs.

The province will look for ways to reduce the strain experienced by young or otherwise vulnerable witnesses in our justice system, in relation to proposed federal legislation (Bill C-2), which provides for increased access to testimonial aids and

expands provisions allowing for the appointment of counsel to conduct cross-examination in cases where the accused is self-represented.

The justice infrastructure will see some much-needed additions and renovations. These include the recently completed court house in Port Hawkesbury and the new justice centres in Bridgewater and Yarmouth, where construction has just started. This is in addition to normal justice facility maintenance activity throughout the year.

Inclusive Communities

More money will be invested to maintain public buildings and to make them more accessible to seniors and people with disabilities.

Last year, significant legislation was passed that will help to make Nova Scotia more inclusive and more conscious of the benefits of diversity. Legislation was passed to provide more services in French to reflect our Acadian heritage, to establish the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs, and to establish the Office of Immigration.

This year, the Office of Acadian Affairs will receive the additional resources it needs to help government comply with the French Language Services Act. The office will work with departments across government to develop tailor-made action plans that will provide francophones with more extensive French language services. This year will essentially be one of taking stock and developing strategies, but improvements will be made as soon as possible.

The Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs will increase its staff complement and see the appointment of a full-time chief executive officer. The office will have funding to promote this founding culture and community.

In 2005–2006, the Office of Immigration wil start attracting more immigrants to Nova Scotia. A $250,000 investment will be made by the office in support of primary to grade 12 language training programs to help immigrant children adapt to their new homeland. Throughout the year, the office will be building bridges with the various immigrant communities and organizations in Nova Scotia, and with national and international agencies around the world.

Our worldly view will also be focused on democracy here at home. Traditionally, women are under-represented on municipal councils, in the House of Assembly, and in the House of Commons; and the province wants more women to be active in the political arena. A successful Candidate's School for women was held in 2004, and it will be hosted by a different Atlantic province in each of the coming four years. The province will sponsor a total of 45 attendees: five in each of the three years that the school is held outside of Nova Scotia, and 30 attendees when the school is in the province.

MEASURE:
Women in political life

Women on Nova Scotia municipal councils	83 as at March, 2004 (18.5% of elected mayors, wardens, and councillors)

	1999	**2003**
Women offering in Nova Scotia provincial elections	52 seats 47 women offered 4 elected	52 seats 36 women offered 6 elected

	2000	**2004**
Nova Scotian women offering/elected in federal elections	11 seats (of 301) 9 women offered 2 women elected	11 seats (of 308) 13 women offered 1 woman elected

	2004	**Over the next four years**
Women attending Candidate School	29	45

Sources: Elections Canada, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, House of Assembly, Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Tightening Government Financial Controls

A number of initiatives will be rolled out in 2005–2006 that will make the province's business practices more efficient and more secure. These include the hiring of more internal auditors. A central office will be established to bring a more systematic, disciplined approach to better manage business risks, increase compliance auditing, and place a greater emphasis on internal controls and fraud prevention. As well, a more efficient central payroll system will be implemented that will be extended to broader public-sector employers over the longer term.

The province will hire additional auditors and program staff to better protect consumers and taxpayers. The auditors will scrutinize the security and financial control measures in government's business registration, land registration, and vital statistics operations. Program staff will ensure accurate and timely reporting by regulated industries such as funeral homes and service providers, paycheque lending operations, and cemeteries, and work with these regulated businesses and their clients to resolve disputes.

Regulatory Reform

The tabling of the final Red Tape Reduction report last year launched the province's ongoing commitment to regulatory reform.

This is part of a commitment to continuous improvement across government, a commitment that combines leadership to effect real change, the tools to improve the quality of our regulations, and an ability to measure and report on our progress.

This multi-year approach will balance improved compliance with public protection, while enhancing the competitiveness of the Nova Scotian economy. Business licensing, public safety, occupational health and safety, and the environment will be our initial focus.

Regulatory reform will benefit Nova Scotia economically and socially:

- Economically, it will improve our business climate and competitive advantage by making compliance less costly and making the rules more clear, consistent, and predictable.
- Socially, it will maintain and strengthen public protection through more effective regulatory and non-regulatory compliance tools.

Departments will regularly review their legislation and regulations to ensure that they remain current, effective, and enforceable. The province will launch a comprehensive regulatory reform initiative focusing on improving the quality of its regulations, the effectiveness of its compliance enforcement programs, and its capacity to assess and address the impact of its regulatory activities on business.

At the same time, the province will work closely with the Government of Canada, other provincial and territorial governments, and industry to minimize differences across jurisdictions in the standards that are applied. This should stimulate interprovincial trade and make Nova Scotia's businesses more competitive on the national level.

This has already started to happen in areas such as commercial trucking, consumer protection, and energy, where "harmonization" of legislation has occurred.

In 2005–2006, the province will promote regulatory efficiency with industry and other levels of government:

- A discussion paper proposing amendments to the Companies Act will be published, with an eye to making the incorporation and registration processes more efficient.
- More online services will be introduced.
- A new comprehensive Energy Act is anticipated, following stakeholder consultation.

- An effective regulatory environment will be developed for natural gas development, production, and transmission through the Atlantic Energy Roundtable III.
- A national video and video game classification standard will be adopted.
- Legislative amendments will be introduced to enable Nova Scotia's participation in the interprovincial securities regulatory streamlining initiative through the passport system.
- An action plan will be developed to remove barriers to private land stewardship, potentially including such measures as identifying funding mechanisms for land securement, addressing property and income tax disincentives, improving coordination amongst conservation partners, and amending the Special Places Protection Act.
- A pilot project will be carried out to streamline the application and approval process for on-site sewage disposal systems, resulting in faster turnaround times for applicants and a refocusing of inspection resources to strengthen the audit, compliance, and enforcement components of program delivery.

Consultations and Other Initiatives, 2005–2006

During the coming fiscal year, the province will seek opinions and insights from Nova Scotians on a variety of topics. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a review of the goals and objectives, and of the progress made, under the Skills Nova Scotia framework
- discussions with Nova Scotia's francophones to develop French language service delivery strategies that meet the needs of this community in a fiscally responsible manner
- a review of Nova Scotia's legislation and policies related to day-care centre licensing and operating grants, day-care client eligibility criteria, and adoption of children in provincial care
- an Employment Support and Income Assistance client satisfaction survey
- a survey of a representative sample of provincial employees to determine what progress the province has made in addressing issues identified in two earlier surveys and to listen to what employees say about making their workplaces safer, more productive, and more efficient
- ongoing consultations between government departments and agencies, external seniors' advocacy groups, and the seniors' community to implement actions outlined in the Strategy for Positive Aging and to engage in the development of policies, programs, and services related to the strategy
- a program review and consultations regarding the redesign of funding programs emanating from the Canada–Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities
- public and stakeholder consultations as part of a process to prepare forest, mineral, parks, and biodiversity strategies for the province.

The province will move forward on several initiatives with the Mi'kmaq in 2005–2006, including

- implementing the June 2002 Umbrella Agreement and signing a Framework Agreement that will act as a road map for treaty negotiations
- developing consultation policies, protocols, and approaches that outline the obligations the province has on consultation with aboriginal peoples

- working with government agencies and the Mi'kmaq to develop an Aboriginal Health Blueprint, which will be part of the discussion at the fall 2005 First Ministers Meeting on Aboriginal Issues along with education, housing, and relationships
- working with the Mi'kmaq and other provincial partners to protect a historically and culturally valuable archaeological site in Debert through the Mi'kmawey Debert Initiative, which aims to preserve and promote the Mi'kmaw culture in Nova Scotia.

As the need arises, the province will engage Nova Scotians on other topics as well.

Consultations will go beyond our borders and coastlines as the province meets with decision makers in the financial and business sectors and foreign governments to promote Nova Scotia as a good place in which to live, to learn, to invest, to develop, as well as a source of high-quality products and services for international buyers.

Throughout the coming year, we will undertake the following activities outside of the province to help Nova Scotians:

- work with the food and seafood industries to help them develop new products and open new markets, helping the industry to grow and prosper
- participate in federal/provincial/territorial meetings of ministers responsible for seniors' issues
- work with other governments, industry, and organizations to improve energy efficiency and to encourage energy conservation throughout Nova Scotia
- continue a multi-year public education plan about energy use and opportunities in the energy sector.

Specifically in the health-care sector, a wait-time advisory committee held its inaugural meeting in March 2005. During 2005–2006, the committee will advise the Minister of Health on wait-time issues, set standards for all health-care services, publish wait-time information, and communicate with the public and service providers on wait-time issues.

Throughout the year, the province will work with school boards, educators, and families to improve the learning experience in Nova Scotia. For example, in 2005–2006, the province will

- help the school boards provide the resources and professional development needed for school advisory councils to have a meaningful voice that supports quality education
- work with community and university partners to develop new advanced public school arts, sciences, social studies, and mathematics courses

- review the structure, role, and mandate of the Nova Scotia Advisory Board on Colleges and Universities to improve how the board provides advice on post-secondary education issues
- develop a management plan for the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework to support the achievement of approved 2005–2006 priority outcomes.

NOVA SCOTIA